DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 108 213 CS 202 098

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TITLE Sketch of English Adverbs.
INSTITUTION Southwest Regional Laboratory for Educational Research and Development, Los Alamitos, Calif.
SPONS AGENCY Office of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
REPORT NO SWRL-TN-2-72-28
PUB DATE Jun 72
NOTE 21p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 PLUS POSTAGE
DESCRIPTORS *Adverbs; *English; *Language Patterns; Language Research; *Linguistics; Linguistic Theory; Syntax; Traditional Grammar; *Transformation Generative Grammar

ABSTRACT

The class of English words traditionally called adverbs is examined and redefined in this paper. The following three subclasses of adverbs are identified: limiters, which are words that modify noun phrases; intensifiers, which are words that modify adjectives; and "true" adverbs, which modify verb phrases and sentences. Examples of these three subclasses are given. (TS)

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ED108213

SWRL SOUTHWEST REGIONAL LABORATORY
TECHNICAL NOTE

DATE June 14, 1972

NO TN-2-72-28

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The class of English words traditionally called adverbs is examined and redefined. Three classes are identified: limiters--words which modify noun phrases; intensifiers--words which modify adjectives; and "true" adverbs--words and phrases which modify verb phrases and sentences.

CS 202 098

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SKETCH OF ENGLISH ADVERBS

Stanley E. Legum

INTRODUCTION

The traditional definition of adverb is "a word that modifies a verb, an adjective, or another adverb" (Curme, 1947). Although this definition has some merit, dictionaries and some school grammars have also typically called several other small groups of words adverbs. In general, if a word is not clearly identifiable as a noun, verb, adjective, conjunction, or preposition, it has been fair game as an adverb. Thus, the expletive _there_; the responses _yes_ and _no_; attention signals such as _well_, _oh_, and _now_; interrogative _wh_-words; _not_ as a sentence negator; subordinating conjunctions such as _because_, _although_, _after_, _when_, and _whenever_; and verb particles have all been classed as adverbs at one time or another (Gleason, 1965).

It has been shown elsewhere (Legum, 1968; Fraser, 1965) that verb particles are adjective phrases and prepositions dominated by a category particle. Katz and Postal (1964) have shown that interrogative _wh_-words are pro forms of noun phrases which may reasonably be considered adverbs. The expletive is now believed to have a transformational origin (Jacobs & Rosenbaum, 1968). _Yes_ and _no_ responses and attention signals will be arbitrarily excluded from this study on the grounds that they are intuitively less closely connected to sentences than any of the other categories under discussion. _Not_ is clearly in a class by itself and will also be excluded from direct study. It may, in fact, be reasonable

to call some of the subordinating conjunctions adverbs, but we will not pre-judge the question.

Excluding wh-words and subordinating conjunctions, the words which may reasonably be taken to satisfy the traditional definition of adverb fall into three natural classes: words which modify noun phrases, words which modify adjectives, and words which modify verb phrases and sentences.[1] Following Gleason (1965), these classes will be referred to as limiters, intensifiers, and adverbs, respectively.

LIMITERS

Only a small number of words seem to be able to modify noun phrases. These include just, only, and merely as in (1) through (6).

1. He gave the job(s) to {just / only / merely} {a boy / the boys}
2. He gave the job(s) {just / only / merely} to {a boy / the boys}
3. He gave {just / only / merely} {a boy / the boys} the job(s)
4. He saw {just / only / merely} a boy
5. {Just / Only / Merely} a boy could do that
6. He is clearly {just / only / merely} a boy

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[1]No claim is being made at this point about the necessity or impossibility of distinguishing between VP and S.

Since these words also modify verb phrases, as in (7) and (8), it is appropriate to describe them as phrase modifiers.[2]

7. He {just / only / merely} called you a name, he didn't hit you

8. {Just / Only / Merely} tell me your desires, and I will see that they are satisfied

Ability of a word to modify a noun phrase in one of the positions illustrated in (1)-(6) does not guarantee the ability to modify that noun phrase in other sentential positions. For instance, barely and scarcely can replace the limiters in sentences (1), (3), (4), (6), and possibly (5), but not in sentence (2). Since (1) through(3) are all instances of indirect objects, we are lead to the suspicion that these examples represent more than on kind of modification.

Closer examination of sentences (1)-(3) lend support to this hypothesis. Consider in particular the sentences (9a-c).

9. a. He gave the jobs to just a boy

   b. He gave the jobs just to a boy

   c. He gave just a boy the jobs

Sentences (9a) and (9c) share the reading (10), while sentences(9b) and (9c) share the reading (11).

10. He gave the jobs to a mere tyke

11. He limited his job giving to one boy. (No adults and no girls got jobs.)

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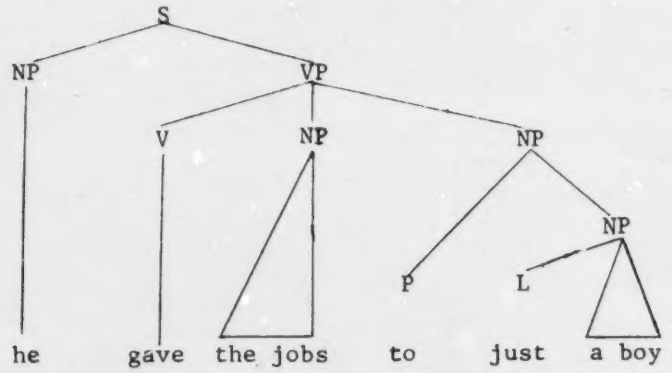
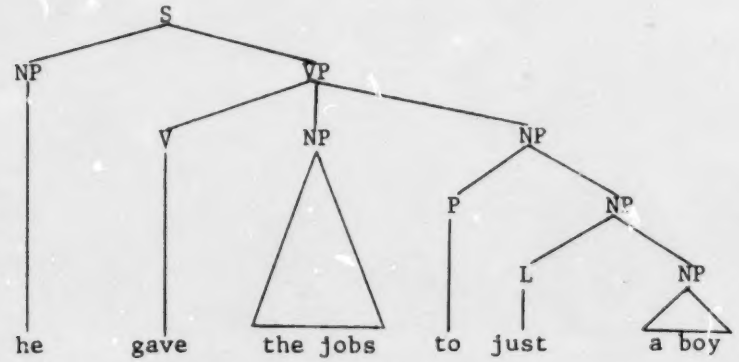
[2]Limiters are usually treated as a part of the determiner system and and called prearticles (e.g., Thomas, 1965). Ability to modify VP's and prepositional phrases demonstrates that limiters have more grammatical functions than a prearticle analysis can describe.

Sentence (9a) must have a structure closer to (12) than to (13).

12.



13.



If (13) were the structure of (9a) it should be possible to derive, among others, question (14) and (15).

14. To just whom did he give the jobs?

15. *Whom did he give the jobs to just?

It is clear, however, that the <u>just</u> in (14) is not the same as the <u>just</u> in in (9a), and (15) is not acceptable at all. Similarly, (13) predicts that (16) can be acceptably derived by relativization and (17) by clefting.

16. *The boy whom he gave the jobs to just is a friend of mine.

17. *It was a boy that he gave the jobs to just.

Structure (12), on the other hand, correctly predicts that both (16) and (17) will be ungrammatical (and hence unacceptable).

A problem arises at this point. If (14) can occur at all, why can't (15), (16), and (17)? One possible answer is that the just of (14), which means something like "precisely" or "exactly," is transformationally attached to a noun phrase after wh-fronting and clefting have applied. This explanation has the advantage of prohibiting (18), (19), and (20), if we make the natural assumption that when the object of a preposition is moved stranding the preposition, the NP node dominating the preposition is pruned.

18. *Whom did he give the jobs just to?

19. *The boy whom he gave the jobs just to is a friend of mine.

20. *It was a boy that he gave the jobs just to.

At the same time, this analysis correctly predicts that (21) is acceptable and synonymous with (14).

21. Just whom did he give the jobs to?

Cleft sentences like (22) and (23) are also correctly predicted to be acceptable.

22. It was to just a boy (that) he gave the jobs.

23. It was just a boy (that) he gave the jobs to.

A difficulty arises, however, with relativization. Under this analysis, (24) and (25) should be acceptable, but are not.

24. *The boy just whom he gave the jobs to is a friend of mine.

25. *The boy to just whom he gave the jobs is a friend of mine.

These sentences can be blocked by preventing limiters from being attached to relative wh-forms but not to question forms.[3] This restriction can make use of the distinction between wh-forms which allows some relative wh's to be realized as that: wh-forms which may be realized as that may not undergo limiter attachment.

This analysis correctly predicts that just can be attached to wh-words introducing embedded questions as in (26).

26. I asked just who he saw.

Apparent counterexamples such as (27) can be shown to be embedded questions rather than relative clauses.

27. I know (just) which boy you saw.

Although it is possible to replace the which in (27) by that, the structure is not the same. For instance, in (28) that is a determiner.

28. I know (just) that boy you saw.

Furthermore, "unreduced" sentences corresponding to (27) do not allow modification by just.

29. a. I know the boy (*just) who you saw.

b. I know the one (*just) who you saw.

Further justification for considering the which of (27) a question form rather than a relative comes from the fact that it is translated as a question word rather than a relativizing word in a

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[3]This analysis was suggested by Sandra Thompson (personal communication).

number of Indo-European languages (including Icelandic and Hindi) as well as non-Indo-European languages (e.g., Hebrew) which maintain morphological distinctions between relative forms and question forms.[4]

An alternative explanation might claim that the just which appears before question wh-forms as in (14) and (21) is a distinct lexical item from the other instances of just so far discussed. This analysis would rule out (24) and (25) by restricting just attachment to words which have not undergone wh-attachment, and would necessitate devising other means of attaching the just of (14) and (21) to question wh's. A distinction would still be required between question and relative wh's. In addition, we would have to set up a form which is closely related in meaning to other homophonous forms and in complementary distribution with them. For these reasons the separate lexical item analysis can be rejected.

Limiter attachment may be similar to the Black English neg-copying rule in that neither rule can attach an item to the subject NP.[5] In the case of Black English, neg-copying copies a neg which is attached to a verb phrase onto any noun phrase to the right of the verb. A parallel analysis would account for the strangeness of some limiters (e.g., scarcely) when attached to subject NP's. Under this analysis it

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[4]The embedded question arguments were suggested by Robert Berdan (personal communication).

[5]See Labov (1971) for description of negative concord and negative attachment in Black English.

would be necessary to assume that some limiters are introduced attached to NP's by the phrase structure rules, while other limiters are introduced attached to VP's or S's and then optionally attached to NP's by limiter attachment.

It might appear that copular sentences would have to be treated as a special case by such a transformation because we can find limiters following the copula but none preceding.

30. He is $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{just}\\\text{only}\\\text{merely}\end{matrix}\right\}$ a boy

31. *He $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{just}\\\text{only}\\\text{merely}\end{matrix}\right\}$ is a boy

At first glance it would seem that we need to make limiter attachment obligatory for copular sentences. This is, in fact, unnecessary if we accept Bach's (1967) proposal for introducing copulas transformationally by attaching them to the auxiliary. Since the limiter is introduced on the VP node and the copula is introduced on the Aux node, the copula will automatically be to the left of the limiter whether or not limiter attachment moves the limiter.

This analysis also has the advantage of providing a simple explanation for a large set of words which appear to modify both NP's and VP's but do not share the mobility of limiters. Consider examples (32) and (33).

32. He was { constantly / continually / eternally / eventually / finally / subsequently / ultimately / briefly / frequently / promptly / quickly / rapidly / rarely / suddenly / surely } a hero.

33. He { constantly / continually / eternally / eventually / finally / subsequently / ultimately / briefly / frequently / promptly / quickly / rapidly / rarely / suddenly / surely } talked to anyone who would listen.

None of these words can replace the limiters in sentences (1), (3), or (4). Under Bach's treatment of the copula, the examples in (32) can be seen to be not noun phrase modification, but a special case of verb phrase modification.

One difficulty arises with this analysis because of sentences like (34).

34. Mary { just / only / merely } has a small bank account.

Bach suggests that have be introduced in the same manner as the copula by attaching it to the auxiliary. If have and be are in fact treated alike, then (34) should be unacceptable. Since Bach's reasons for introducing have and be transformationally are largely independent, we could side-step the problem by insisting that possessive have be introduced in the same way as other English verbs. Alternatively, we could adopt Bach's analysis, but modify it so that have is introduced under the VP node.

In summary, it has been suggested that limiters can be introduced into the phrase structure attached to noun phrases and verb phrases. Limiters attached to verb phrases can optionally be moved to NP's which follow them. It appears that all limiters can occur in the positions indicated in examples (1), (3), (4), (6), and (7) above, but that many non-limiters can also occur in (6). For this reason, sentences similar to (1), (3), (4), and (7) can be taken as definitive test frames for limiters.

INTENSIFIERS

Intensifiers are words which can modify adjectives, but not adjective phrases. In the terminology of Chomsky (1970) and Stockwell et al. (1968), they are specifiers of adjectives. Very, too, more and most are intensifiers in (35) and (36).

35. Ice cream is $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{very}\\ \text{too}\\ \text{more}\\ \text{most}\end{matrix}\right\}$ fattening

36. a. *Ice cream is very too fattening

b. *Ice cream is too very fattening[6]

c. *Ice cream is very more fattening

d. *Ice cream is most very fattening

Since better is clearly an adjective phrase in itself, we may take as a test of intensifiers, their ability to fit in frame (37) and their inability to fit in frame (38).

37. Ice cream is_____fattening

38. This ice cream may be_____better

Words which can fit in both (37) and (38), or in neither, are not intensifiers: Words which do not fit in (37) or analogous sentences with different adjectives do not modify adjectives; words which can fit in (38) or analogous sentences modify adjective phrases or verb phrases and are probably limiters or true adverbs. Some common intensifiers are: very, real, pretty, fairly, awfully, awful, too, more, and most.[7]

Besides modifying adjectives, intensifiers also modify certain ly-adverbs. In general, if an intensifier modifies an adjective, then it also modifies the corresponding ly-adverb. Furthermore, if an

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[6](32b) is, of course, acceptable with an emphatic too. Emphatic too is not an intensifier. Too with the meaning "also" is not an intensifier, either.

[7]The union of the set of limiters and the set of intensifiers is nearly the same as Fries' Group D (Fries, 1952). See also Gleason (1965). Note that while quite behaves like an intensifier in (35)-(38) it also behaves like a limiter in (1), (3), (4), (5), (6), and (7), but not (2) and (8). Thus, the status of quite is unclear. It does not even seem reasonable to analyze quite as belonging to both lexical classes.

intensifier does not modify a given adjective, then it also does not modify the corresponding ly-adverb. Thus, we find the combinations in (39) but not those in (40).[8]

39. {very, real, pretty, fairly, awfully, awful, too, more, most} {hurried(ly), prompt(ly), quick(ly), quiet(ly), sudden(ly)}

40. {very, real, pretty, fairly, awfully, awful, too, more, most} {*absolute(ly), *eternal(ly), *eventual(ly), *initial(ly), *subsequent(ly), *ultimate(ly)}

The data presented in (39) and (40) can be accounted for by the following three hypotheses:

41. ly-adverbs are transformationally derived from the corresponding adjectives (without ly).

42. An adjective can be modified by any intensifier if and only if it can be modified by all intensifiers.

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[8]Acceptability judgements for specific pairs may vary from dialect to dialect. Some speakers, for instance, may reject real hurried and real hurriedly. As long as both the adjective and the corresponding adverb are rejected, these examples still illustrate the point being made.

43. If an adjective can be modified by an intensifier, then the corresponding ly-adverb can also be modified by that intensifier.

If hypothesis (43) can be sustained, it would be strong evidence for (41). (43) is, of course, predicted by (41).

There are a small number of exceptions to (41). For example, hardly is too far removed in meaning from hard for a transformational derivation of the one from the other to be acceptable. Such exceptions can be easily handled by having separate lexical entries for the two words and marking hard as an exception to the rule posited by (41). This analysis is supported by the fact that the intensifiers listed in (39) and (40) can occur with hard but not with hardly.[9]

There are also a number of exceptions to (42). All of these are also exceptions to (43): In each case a specific intensifier is able to modify an adjective but not the corresponding ly-adverb. Consider, for example, (44) and (45).

44. Her decision seemed $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{pretty}\\\text{awful}\\\text{awfully}\end{matrix}\right\}$ final

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[9]Distinguishing hard and hardly in the lexicon has diachronic justification as well as synchronic justification. Bloomfield (1933) notes that "the Old English adjective heard 'hard' underlay two adverbs, hearde and heardliche; the former survives in its old relation, as hard, but the latter, hardly, has been isolated in the remotely transferrred meaning of 'barely, scarcely,' through loss of intermediate meanings such as 'only with difficulty.'"

45. She had decided $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{*pretty}\\ \text{*awful}\\ \text{*awfully}\end{matrix}\right\}$ finally

For reasons which remain obscure, most of the examples of this nature occur with adjectives which cannot occur with the intensifiers very, real, more, and most. Thus, (46) is unacceptable as well as (47).[10]

46. *Her decision seemed $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{very}\\ \text{real}\\ \text{more}\\ \text{most}\end{matrix}\right\}$ final

47. *She had decided $\left\{\begin{matrix}\text{very}\\ \text{real}\\ \text{more}\\ \text{most}\end{matrix}\right\}$ finally

The list of specific intensifiers which can occur with an adjective but not with its corresponding ly-adverb, varies from adjective to adjective. As a comparison of (44) and (46) will illustrate, attempts to provide semantic explanations for these co-occurrence restrictions seem futile. Thus, it appears that in addition to whatever mechanism is used to mark adjectives as being modifiable or unmodifiable by intensifiers in general, it will be necessary to account separately for exceptions which violate hypothesis (42). The same mechanism which restricts modification by intensifiers can be used to block ly-adverb formation in just thoses cases in which an exceptional intensifier has been attached to

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[10]There may be some dialectal or idiolectal variation with the sentences of (46).

an adjective.[11] Notice that some mechanism for blocking ly-adverb formation is required independently, to exclude the formation of tally from tall and fastly form fast.

The adjectives in (39) and (40) are distinguishable in that the absoluteness of the latter set allows no comparison or intensification. It may be that a semantic feature [absolute] is all that is necessary to distinguish these sets of adjectives.[12]

An interesting property of intensifiers is that they can be used to distinguish between deverbal adjectives and participles. Thus, telling can be seen to be an adjective in (48a) while it is clearly a present participle in (48b).

48. a. It was a very telling point.

b. The salesman was (*very) telling us about a car.

Some speakers can accept (49a) but not (49b)

49. a. John was very surprised at Mary.

b. ?John was very surprised by Mary.

It is clear that surprised in (49a) must be an adjective. Surprised in (49b) must also be an adjective for those speakers who find (49b) acceptable, for there is no corresponding active sentence with very.

50. *Mary very surprised John.

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[11] This analysis of "exceptional" intensifier-adjective pairs is somewhat complex. If it is in fact valid, one would expect that: (a) children would exhibit difficulty in learning such exceptions to exceptions; and (b) adults would show a high degree of inter-individual variation.

[12] This terminolgy was suggested by Norman Gary (personal communication).

Those speakers who find (49b) unacceptable can be accounted for by simply noting that without the very this sentence can be the passive of (51).

51. Mary surprised John.

52. John was surprised by Mary.

For such speakers, (49a) is a copular sentence with a deverbal adjective surprised, while the verb of (49b) and (52) is surprised with the copula acting as a passive auxiliary.

Clearer cases of -ed serving as a derivational suffix can be found in words such as cross-eyed, long-legged, and possibly naked and rugged. Some of these adjectives can occur with intensifiers while others cannot.

53. He was { very / real / pretty / fairly } { cross-eyed / long-legged / *naked / rugged }

ADVERBS

True adverbs, as distinguished from limiters and intensifiers are able to appear sentence finally as in (54).

54. John gave his books to Mary { yesterday / suddenly / frequently / deliberately }

They are unable to appear between verbs and following "kernel" noun phrases except with parenthetical or appositive intonation.

55. *John gave { yesterday / suddenly / frequently / deliberately } his books to Mary

The latter fact distinguishes true adverbs from limiters while the former distinguishes them from intensifiers.

56. a. John gave {just / only / merely} his books to Mary

b. *John gave his books to Mary {very / real / pretty}

Of the many distinguishing characteristics of one-word adverbs, those illustrated by (54) and (55) have been chosen because they also apply to what are traditionaly called adverbial clauses and phrases. Thus, the sentences of (57) are acceptable while those of (58) are not.

57. a. John gave his books to Mary {because he liked her / after he kissed her / while thinking of Sue}

b. John gave his books to Mary {on Friday afternoon / in the garden / with a foolish smile}

58. a. *John gave {because he liked her / after he kissed her / while thinking of Sue} his books to Mary

b. *John gave {on Friday afternoon / in the garden / with a foolish smile} his books to Mary

The classification systems which have been proposed for true adverbs and the movement rules which apply to them will not be dealt with at this point. It is sufficient for the purposes of the present sketch to note that the semantic force of these adverbs is to modify entire verb phrases or sentences rather than specific verbs, adjectives, nouns or noun phrases.

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